

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	17/07/2015
Unique reference number	SC012021
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school
Registered person	The Loddon School Company
Responsible individual	Ms Marion Cornick
Registered manager	Mrs Joy Wake
Inspector	Mr Keith Riley/Ms Amanda Maxwell

Inspection date	17/07/2015
Previous inspection judgement	Improved effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	Good
The children's home provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Good
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good

SC012021

Summary of findings

The children's home provision is good because:

- Young people have a good quality of life. There are warm and trusting relationships with staff. They develop their social interaction skills.
- There is a staff team who are immediately responsive to the needs of young people. Staff are knowledgeable about the young people in their care and plan activities accordingly. These are varied and meaningful.
- Staff work with other professionals to improve outcomes. There is professional challenge to the practice of others when necessary.
- Communication across the board is good. Young people with severe communication difficulties have a strong voice. Communication with other professionals is top class. Contact with parents is fully supported.
- There are good arrangements for education using a 24-hour curriculum. Young people make good progress. They learn functional life skills they can take into their adult life.
- Young people are in good health. They are carefully assessed so the right therapy and interventions are used.
- The oversight and management of challenging behaviour is meticulous. Incidents are analysed and there is immediate learning. Records are meaningful. Reports are detailed.
- There is thorough challenge, oversight and improvement to practice.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
Ensure that any limitation placed on a child's privacy is kept under review and, if necessary, revised. (Regulation 21 (c)(iii))	30/09/2015
Ensure children are helped to lead healthy lifestyles, in particular review the catering arrangements. (Regulation 10 (1)(c))	30/09/2015
Implement the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect, in particular ensure that designated personnel have access to the necessary records. (Regulation 34 (1)(b))	30/09/2015
In order to meet the quality and purpose of care standard the registered person is required to: (c) ensure that the premises used for the purposes of the home are designed and furnished so as to— (i) meet the needs of each child,; in particular complete the planned refurbishment work. (Regulation 6 (2)(c)(i))	31/12/2015
In order to meet the protection of children standard the registered person is required to ensure: (b) that the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm. This is with particular reference to ensuring all substances hazardous to health are controlled. (Regulation 12	30/09/2015

(2)(b))	
Ensure full and satisfactory information is available in relation to the individual in respect of each of the matters in Schedule 2, especially a full employment history. (Regulation 32 (3)(d))	30/09/2015
Compile in relation to the children's home a statement ("the statement of purpose") which covers the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 16 (1))	30/09/2015
Notify HMCI if there is an allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there. (Regulation 40 (4)(c))	30/09/2015

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- Consider what additional safeguards are required in the management of medicines, in particular stock reconciliation. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards, paragraph 7.17)
- Monitor and review the patterns and trends of turnover of staff, whether agency or directly employed, and be able understand and where possible, address any negative trends, especially ensure exit interviews take place. (Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards, paragraph 10.19)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This school provides education and residential care for up to 30 pupils from 8 to 19 years of age who have severe and complex learning difficulties associated with autism. The home operates as a charitable trust and, as it is a school as well, it is approved by the Department for Education.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
19/02/2015	CH - Interim	improved effectiveness
13/11/2014	CH - Full	Outstanding
25/03/2014	CH - Interim	Good Progress
11/09/2013	CH - Full	Good

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home are	good
Young people benefit from the trusted relationships with staff who know them well and understand their unique needs. Communication difficulties are no barrier, young people are listened to. They have confidence staff will respond to their needs. They are clearly at the centre of practice. Behaviours that challenge are minimised. Activities are first class. Young people, who need structure in their day due to their disability, have a wide range of pastimes to participate in, both on and off the premises. Staff use each young person's preferred method of communication to let them know what is 'now and next'. Young people, who struggle to understand upcoming events, are less anxious as a result. Staff are not averse to risk. An example is ensuring young people, who historically have displayed risks with animals, have a regular activity in the home's small animal farm. They are then able to move on, for example by having horse-riding lessons. Young people enjoy the comfort of their individualised rooms as well as the communal areas. A parent stated how there is a lovely, positive, homely atmosphere. They also enjoy warm relationships with staff. A parent said her son has the quality of life he deserves due to the staff who are compassionate and understanding. A further parent said it is clear that staff have a very good bond with the young people. Young people are able to demonstrate their self-management competencies, such as using their bedroom as a calm down space. Staff are aware that opening a door to check on well-being may re-escalate a situation. Some older rooms have observation ports in the bedroom door which are used to check ongoing welfare. Their use is not underpinned by a clear protocol, which has the potential to compromise privacy. Young people may struggle with social interaction and sensory issues. Individual meal times are assessed to maximise the social opportunity and minimise anxiety. Young people may select a dish within their own home or opt for the food prepared in the main kitchen. Staff commented on the quality of some of the food from both sources, citing it is often purchased pre-packaged or frozen. This was	

observed at inspection. A young person gave the food a 'thumbs down' when asked about it.

There are good arrangements in place for the administration of medication, the same sorts as any good parent would make. Additional safeguards, such as the routine reconciliation of stock, are not routinely performed. There is no immediate risk.

Staff work with health professionals, including the school nurse, to keep young people as healthy as possible. A parent said, 'if my child is unwell the staff are quick to call us and the general practitioner. They are sensitive to how she is feeling and will keep everything as low key as possible'. Young people, who struggle with health appointments have their needs met. Other advice is available such as speech and language or occupational health. Individual strategies are developed such as touch therapy or a sensory diet. A professional said, 'everything is considered possible. New things are tried such as various therapies which aid health and well-being'.

The standard of accommodation is mixed; there are excellent facilities such as in the two new homes and the refurbishment of some bathrooms, other facilities in some of the houses need improving. The senior management team recognise this shortfall and are committed to improvements. There is a clear development plan with realistic time-scales to complete this work.

Staff fully support contact with family and others who are important to the young people. Young people are supported to write letters home, telephone parents or have contact through video conferencing. Parents visit regularly and describe the warm embrace of staff.

There is a holistic approach to education. Staff use supportive strategies to personalise learning for life skills incorporating literacy, numeracy and science. Young people learn independent living skills such as cooking and personal care. A social worker stated, 'I am really pleased with the massive progress (name) has made since being at the home'. (NB. There was an aligned education inspection on the same day as this visit. A separate report is available on the Ofsted website.)

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good

There is a clear procedure for safeguarding and child protection. The Registered Manager is the designated safeguarding lead with a clear structure to deputise in her absence. This is not adhered to in practice. Deputy safeguarding leads do not have access to all the records they need to. On two occasions, significant events were not notified to Ofsted. Young people were not deemed at risk. Any allegations are shared with the relevant agencies. There is agreement with other professionals how best to proceed.

In the main, there are good day-to-day arrangements to manage the control of substances hazardous to health. Material safety data sheets clearly guide staff what to do in the event of an emergency. In one incident, an oil used for aromatherapy was not suitably assessed. Staff responded appropriately by gaining advice from health professionals.

Methods used for monitoring and reviewing behaviour work well. Effective recording allows for comprehensive oversight. Immediate debrief and reflection means any changes to practice are learnt and adopted quickly. Staff consult with other behaviour management specialists to ensure there are bespoke interventions in place to keep everyone as safe as possible. A professional said, 'staff have been very good at sharing behavioural incidents and I am pleased this is reviewed by a positive behaviour support manager'. A parent said, 'although my child can exhibit significant challenging behaviour and self-harming behaviour, I am confident that staff keep her safe'.

Incidents of young people going missing are extremely rare. There has been one incident since the last inspection. Staff quickly enacted the home's robust procedure. They worked extremely well together to ensure the young person's safe return within minutes. Learning from the incident has minimised any chance of recurrence.

The management team are trained in safer recruitment practice. Although gaps in employment history appear to be legitimate, they are not always formally explored with the candidate.

Young people live in a safe environment. There is a swift response to any maintenance issues. Contractors provide specialist advice and this is acted upon.

Young people with severe communication difficulties have a strong voice. Staff are aware of their idiosyncrasies and how they may communicate through behaviour. There are clear boundaries and a consistent approach. Clearly young people trust staff and are able to indicate to them their immediate choice or need. Any incidents are thoroughly reviewed so there is learning. Behaviours that challenge are minimised.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
Managers ensure very good collaborative working with other professionals. Case records and reports give a good, up-to-date overview of individual needs and progress. A professional said, 'communication is good between staff and the social worker. Reports are organised, timely and extremely detailed and mean that staff know the young people well'. Daily records are concise with excellent cross-referencing to other relevant documents. The systems in place maximise the time staff are available to spend one-to-one with the young people. There is an immediate response to priority needs. Aggressive behaviour resulting from anxiety significantly diminishes. Staff training provides all staff with the skills they need to deliver good care. Induction is robust. Agency staff undergo the same level of training. Staff say they feel supported and work well together as a whole team. Some staff saw formal management supervision as negative, rather than a means for support. The Registered Manager has strengthened the oversight of each home with the appointment of a manager in each one. Mentors support new care staff and are available when they need extra support. Some parents and professionals commented on the number of staff changes. The senior management team acknowledge the staffing challenges. They are using a variety of techniques to appeal to and employ new staff. There is flexibility to attract a wider staff pool. Fixed term contracts with agency staff currently cover the shortfalls. When staff leave there is a good procedure for an exit interview. This is not always followed. There is a risk that data is not statistically significant and the learning about how to retain staff is limited. The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed. It does not contain all the information required in the recent amendments to the regulations, such as how the home obtains the views, wishes feelings of young people and the range of activities the home provides. This is an administrative shortfall as staff perform these functions particularly well. There is rigorous internal and external monitoring that provides excellent challenge to practice.	

The Registered Manager ensures there is all necessary information to consider admission into the home. This includes working effectively with overseas partners when necessary. Detailed placement planning maximises the chance of a successful placement. There have been no discharges since the last inspection.

There is good integration with the local community such as trips out to a local theme park, restaurants and the swimming pool.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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